



Press release Waldrappteam LIFE+12-BIO\_AT\_000143

Human-led migration 2015

### **31 Northern Bald Ibises and two microlight aircrafts: Imminent start of the human-led migration across the Alps to Tuscany**

In the course of the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe a human-led migration takes place once a year. Fledglings from zoo breeds are imprinted on human foster parents, and trained to follow a microlight aircraft which leads them from the northern foothills of the Alps to Tuscany. This year, the Waldrappteam plans to fly with twice as many birds as during previous years: 31 young Northern Bald Ibises will be flying in a formation with two microlight aircrafts from Seekirchen at Lake Wallersee across the Alps to Italy. The journey will start in a few days, as soon as the weather conditions permit.

During the last months, two groups of young birds were raised and trained by human foster parents. Since the end of July, joined training flights are conducted with both groups. These flights were promising. Johannes Fritz, project manager: "During flight, the two groups merged immediately. It is a very unique experience to fly with 31 birds! If we succeed in leading this large group all the way to Tuscany, this is a great achievement for the reintroduction of the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe".

The route has a total length of around 1000 km. This journey should be completed in four to five daily flight stages. Already on the first flight day, the formation has to cross the Alps, which is the most challenging part of the whole journey. The final destination is the nature reserve Laguna di Orbetello in southern Tuscany, where the young birds will meet their conspecifics, who already have been shown the migration route during the past years, either by humans or experienced birds.

The Northern Bald Ibis, one of the most endangered migratory bird species on earth, occurred in Europe until the beginning of the 17th century. It became extinct in Europe mainly due to overhunting. The EU co-funded project Reason for Hope (LIFE + Biodiversity) with partners from Austria, Italy and Germany, aims to re-establish the Northern Bald Ibis in Europe as a migratory species.

Journalists are welcome to visit the team at the campsite in Seekirchen at Lake Wallersee or at stopover sites along the flight route.

**Picture Download:**

<https://www.dropbox.com/sc/r7oq4bqjsw99x8a/AABMfZaVkBrZ007-CX2oJ328a>

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Picture Flightteam: from left Daniela Tritscher, Pablo Przesang, Corinna Esterer, Anne-Gabriela Schmalstieg (foster parents), Walter Holzmüller (pilot), Johannes Fritz (project leader, pilot).

**Video Material HD** on request; see the demo video:

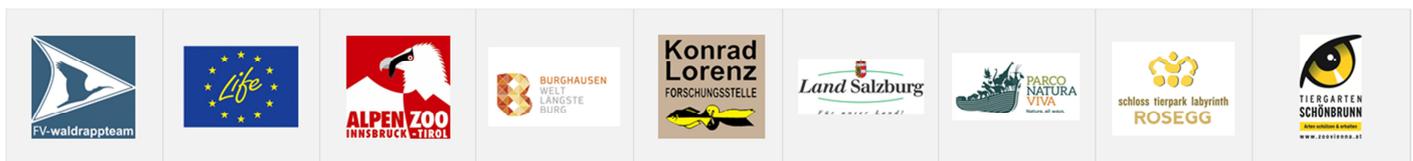
<https://youtu.be/nCW82bawv5A>

See our daily updates at ([www.waldrapp.eu](http://www.waldrapp.eu)).

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